Legitimation in Imperial China: Discussions Under The Jurchen-Chin Dynasty by Hok-lam Chan

REVIEWS

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Between 1194 and 1200 the ruler of the Chin 金 dynasty, Wan-yen Ma-ta-ko 完顏麻達葛 or Emperor Ching 璟 (Chang-tsung 章宗, r. 1190–1208), called upon a group of Han and Jurchen court officials to discuss the appropriate "cosmic power" for Chin. The task of the discussants was to decide where Chin should locate itself in the "cyclical domination of powers" (*te yün* 德運) according to the mutual production sequence of the five phases of change (wood, fire, earth, metal, water) or, as Professor Chan translates, the Five Agents. In 1202 a choice was made. Chin would not claim "metal," as the dynastic name Gold invited or as those desiring to succeed T'ang's "earth" proposed. Nor would it choose "wood," in succession to Liao's "water." Instead it chose "earth," in succession to Sung's association with "fire." However, this was not the end of the matter. Wan-yen Wu-tu-pu 吾睹補, Emperor Hsun 珣 (Hsuan-tsung 宣宗, r. 1213–1224), reopened the debate in 1214. "Earth" was poorly defended—a majority called for adopting

"metal"—and the emperor either reaffirmed "earth" or let the matter drop.

Professor Chan argues that these discussions provide access to an internal Chin debate over the basis for the legitimacy of the dynasty and two of its emperors. Most discussants placed Chin in the "legitimate succession" (*cheng t'ung* 正統) of dynasties through Chinese history. But opinions were not uniform and, as Chan notes, "it is not easy . . . to unveil the political motivations of these various groups in the absence of collateral information" (p. 110). Chan argues that the general trend was in favor of claiming that Chin was a successor to Chinese dynasties. But he also points to a minority opinion in which Chin was treated as the creation of the Jurchens as a people with roots in northeast Asia and thus implicitly not subject to the historical precedents of Chinese dynasties. In an earlier analysis of these discussions, Michael C. Rodgers gave particular attention to this view, suggesting that it may still have been possible to argue that Chin was legitimate as the heir to ancient Koguryŏ.[1]

Professor Chan has translated and extensively annotated the known documentary record of the debates (ch. 8–12, pp. 139–170) and written three chapters of interpretation. However, since they are not well-known historical turning points the debates gain meaning only when placed in larger contexts. Chan chooses two: the political history of Chin and "legitimation" in Chinese and Western history and theory. I felt some regret that this most knowledgeable historian placed the issue of legitimation before the analysis of Jurchen-Chin history. Given his command of Chin and Chinese history during the period, he could also have used the analysis of the debates to address problems common to the northern tribal peoples who controlled Han populations from the tenth through fourteenth centuries. But this would have been a different book than the one Chan chose to write.

One of the promising aspects of this book is the author's willingness to approach political and institutional history from the perspective of contemporary discussions of legitimacy and legitima-

[1] M. C. Rodgers, "The Late Chin Debates on Dynastic Legitimacy," *Sung Studies Newsletter* 13 (1977): 57–66.

tion (chapter 1). As Chan presents it, legitimation is a solution to a fairly straightforward political problem. Continued reliance on force to maintain power and authority is inefficient. Therefore, "Any ruling individual or group, if it aspires to long-term authority, needs not only to achieve consensus among those in power but, more important, must secure the trust and support of its subjects" (p. 10). And, quoting Richard Bendix in *Kings or People*, "legitimation achieves what power alone cannot, for it establishes the belief in the rightness of rule which, as long as it endures, precludes massive challenges" (p. 10). I take it that Chan's understanding of legitimation is fairly close to what was known in late imperial China as the transition from military rule (*wu* 武) to the civil order (*wen* 文). Understanding how such transitions were accomplished is an issue of considerable historical importance.

While noting the work of Weber, Eisenstadt, Bendix and Sternberger, Chan adopts two sets of distinctions in his discussion of legitimation. First he claims that "There can be two dimensions, the *symbolic* and the *substantive*, in any process of legitimation" (p. 11). The division into symbolic and substantive is fundamental to the organization of this book—we are told that the discussion will center on the symbolic—but it is not a clear distinction. The two are said to be complementary and interdependent but when the terms are defined it appears that the substantive includes the symbolic. "The symbolic dimension refers to the external manifestation of legitimate authority as it is nourished in religious beliefs and political thought pertaining to the mandate of the individual or group to rule, and the right to exercize power over subjects" (p. 11). "The substantive dimension refers to the internal processes of conscious actions initiated by the ruler or power group to win recognition of its right to exercize power over its subjects. These include, in the main, the symbolic dimension amplified by various institutions and practices to achieve the substance of legitimacy" (p. 11). These practices include coercion. While I do not know what internal and external refer to here, my sense is that a distinction is being made between traditional formula for claiming that those with power rule legitimately and the measures taken to persuade men to accept those claims. Because Chan's discussion of legitimation in Chinese history is devoted to one symbolic formula for claiming legitimate

succession, this distinction may serve his purposes. Yet the dichotomy reduces the interesting question of how rule is legitimated to the nearly trivial matter of formalities for acknowledging political authority as legitimate. We need to ask why certain formulations rather than others are adopted and why significant groups choose to accept or reject them. Chan's second set of distinctions is based on comments made by Jeremy Adams for the Conference on the Legitimation of Chinese Imperial Regimes. Adams argued that at least five different kinds of legitimation could take place: procedural (consolidation of authority), coercion, semantic (ceremony, portents), scholastic, and popular. This approach includes the symbolic-substantive distinction but although Chan cites it later he does not use it as the framework for analysis.

Chan's concern with the "symbolic dimension" helps to explain why his second chapter, "The Patterns of Legitimation in Imperial China," focusses on the use of five phases theory in relation to "legitimate succession" (*cheng t'ung*) instead of describing the typical ways in which conquerors, usurpers, and their successors "legitimated" their rule in the broad sense of chapter 1. This does prepare the reader for the Chin discussions, but Chan's purpose is larger: he intends to discuss the Chinese contribution to legitimation as a universal phenomenon. While we do get a sense of a unique Chinese approach to scholastic legitimation, it is not clear how the Chinese theory changes our understanding of legitimation as a universal process.

This second chapter would be stronger if it gave less weight to the claim that "The Chinese approximation of the Western concept of legitimacy, in the sense of the ruler's mandate and the recognition of his right by the governed, is known as *cheng t'ung*" (p. 21). Chan's concern with finding a traditional equivalent for the modern concept explains, I think, why this sentence does not end with the phrase "is known as *t'ien ming*." In fact, Chan's historical review supports his narrower definition of *cheng t'ung* as "a well delineated line of transmission of legitimate political authority" (p. 22), a sense which remained with the term until the Sung dynasty. *Cheng t'ung* implies "legitimacy" because it refers to the idea that continuity in succession makes political authority legitimate. But once men agreed that continuity legitimated authority, the problem became how to claim continuity in the face of political change.

Chan argues that five phases theory was used to accomplish this—it enabled men to claim that a political change was a means of according with the higher continuity of heaven's cycles. He discusses this appeal to cosmic continuity in Ch'in[2] and Han times, and gives a very useful account of the post-Han historiographers' use of the five phases to define lineages of successive dynasties which "legitimated" particular states in a multi-state world. These later schemes were known as *cheng t'ung*. However, Chan also treats the earlier political use of the five phases under the rubric of *cheng t'ung*. In fact, while the term *t'ung* was used in the Former Han to discuss cosmic continuity,[3] Pan Ku 班固 of the Later Han was the first to speak of *cheng t'ung*.[4] Pan's point was that the "true" (*cheng*) transmission of authority was one based on blood descent. In rejecting cosmic continuity Pan denied the legitimacy of Wang Mang's Hsin dynasty, which claimed continuity on the cosmic basis of five phases theory, and this inspired attempts to show that the Liu family was descended from Yao (although Former Han thinkers had been content to use the five phases in explaining why Han represented continuity with Chou).[5] Post-Han historiographers

[2] Chan writes that "The Ch'in emperor was the first Chinese ruler to use the Five Agents theory for legitimating his accession and rationalizing changes in rituals and institutions" (p. 27). However, he does not explain why he believes Jack L. Dull was wrong in arguing that five phases theory was not a primary device in legitimating Ch'in rule (it contradicted the Ch'in claim to govern "forever"). See Dull, "The Legitimation of the Ch'in," paper for the Conference on the Legitimation of Chinese Imperial Regimes," pp. 34–36; Chan cites this essay.

[3] See Jao Tsung-i 饒宗頤, *Chung-kuo shih-hsüeh-shang chih cheng-t'ung lun* 中國史學上之正統論 (Hong Kong: Lung-men, 1977), pp. 3–6.

[4] It is misleading to trace the origin of the term *cheng t'ung* to the *Kung-yang Commentary* (p. 26) if, as Chan notes, the use of the phrases *ta chü cheng* 大居正 and *ta i t'ung* 大一統 from the *Kung-yang* as glosses on the term begins with Ou-yang Hsiu in the eleventh century A.D. (p. 89, cf. p. 175, note 7).

[5] Chan suggests that the designations of *cheng* 正 and *jun* 閏 (intercalary), the latter used to deny selected previous dynasties a place in the legitimate succession of dynasties and phases, began with Pan Ku (p. 31). However, his reference to Pan Ku's encomium in the biography of Wang Mang is misleading. The passage uses the term *jun wei* 閏位 (intercalary position) but does not contrast this with or use the term *cheng*, nor apparently does it refer to the five phases. Chan also argues that certain post-Han historians, Hsi Tso-ch'in 習鑿齒 (d. 384) in particular, made the term *cheng t'ung* include such historical criteria as "rightful succession and moral leadership, geopolitical considerations, and perpetuation of the culture" (p. 33). I have not yet been able to find the term *cheng t'ung* used in this way, although Hsi argued that satisfying such criteria made a dynasty legitimate. Specific examples would have been useful here.

kept the term and the idea of transmission of authority from the sage kings, while returning to the idea of cosmic continuity.

Chan shows that Sung literati changed the way men thought about *cheng t'ung*. Ou-yang Hsiu 歐陽修 and others rejected the practice of correlating the transmission of authority with the five phases, arguing instead that the *cheng-t'ung*, the true succession of legitimate dynasties, was those dynasties that had established either moral authority or political unity. Ou-yang held that in the unified empire literati should be concerned with maintaining the moral and political integrity of the state. Such views had the effect of making continuity irrelevant to political legitimacy.[6] In his review of *cheng t'ung* ideas from Yuan to the present (chapter 7), Chan shows that the cosmic *cheng t'ung* was not used in legitimating later dynasties. The Chin dynasty, a state competing with Sung for territory and prestige, was the exception.

A debate over the cosmic correlate of a dynasty may really concern nothing more than cosmic phases, but it may also be a cover for a factional dispute over policy and personnel. Similarly we might argue that Ou-yang Hsiu's ideas about *cheng t'ung* had little to do with legitimating Sung and much to do with literati values. Thus our interpretation of what such debates were "really" about turns on our understanding of the context in which they took place. Professor Chan's discussion of the Chin historical setting in his third chapter, together with his accounts of Chin politics in later

[6] Ssu-ma Kuang 司馬光 appears to recognize that the order of succession had become irrelevant to legitimacy when he writes that in his arrangement of dynasties he was "not honoring one and treating another with contempt, nor making the distinction between orthodox and intercalary positions." See Ssu-ma Kuang, *Tzu-chih t'ung-chien* 資治通鑑 (Peking: Ku-chi ch'u-pan, 1956), 69.2187-88, tr. Achilles Fang, *The Chronicle of the Three Kingdoms*, 2 vols., Harvard-Yenching Institute Studies, 6 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard-Yenching Institute, 1952), 1:47. Unless I am misunderstanding Chan, this appears to contradict his claim that Ssu-ma distinguished between legitimate and illegitimate rulers (p. 39). In contrast to Chan I would stress the difference between Ssu-ma's work and Chu Hsi's plan for the *kang-mu* 綱目; Chu aimed to restore the importance of moral judgement in historiography. It is true that Ssu-ma "did not discard the Five Agents theory," in the sense that he recognized its historical use, but he did deny its validity as a tool for historical analysis; see *Ssu-ma wen-cheng kung chuan-chia chi* 司馬文正公傳家集 (*Wan-yu wen-k'u* ed.), 21.309-10, "Hsi shih" 惜時. The line of transmission Ssu-ma envisioned did not require correlation with the five phases in part because of the tradition of dynastic abdication; a discussion of this practice in the context of legitimate succession would have been useful.

chapters, provides the context for his analyses and is a welcome addition to the growing body of Western language material on Chin.

Some of his account is familiar from Jing-shen Tao's *The Jurchen in Twelfth-Century China: A Study in Sinicization* (University of Washington Press, 1976). The story line is similar: the Jurchens, coming from outside to conquer part of China, underwent a process of sinicization. The history of Chin, and of the Jurchens to some degree, can be described in terms of three simultaneous transitions. First, there was a gradual shift in the political center from north to south, marked most readily by successive moves of the capital from Shang-ching (near modern Harbin) to Yen-ching (Peking) in 1153 and thence to Pien-ching (Kaifeng) in 1214, when the Mongols invaded Hopei. Second, the government was successively reorganized in a manner intended to increase central authority and create a single political center. Third, an increasing number of Jurchens associated with the political center became "sinicized."[7] These transitions suggest that Chin's transformation into a Chinese dynasty is the appropriate famework for the study of Chin history. Much writing on Chin implies a certain inevitability to this process. The Jurchens, it often seems, were dragged along by events of their own making as they struggled to keep control over what they had conquered. Chan suggests as much when he writes, "All of these sinicizing actions greatly reinforced centralization. They were not simply emulations of Chinese tradition but overt attempts to legitimize and strengthen Jurchen rule over the majority indigenous population" (p. 61). And again, "The Jurchen rulers had become so entrenched in Chinese cultural tradition that they had little choice but to bow before its demands as long as they sought to legitimize their authority as a minority people ruling over a population with a superior cultural heritage" (p. 71).

However, a close reading of Chan's political history of Chin indicates that beneath the seemingly inevitable progress toward sinicization the Chin polity was beset by tensions between emperor and aristocrats, civil and military, and Hans and Jurchens. Power

[7] It is useful to differentiate between those Jurchens who became indistinguishable from their Han neighbors from those, notably political leaders, who adopted values and practices associated with the political elites of Chinese dynasties while keeping their identity as Jurchens. I take the mention of "sinicized Jurchens" and "sinicization" to refer to the latter.

in Chin China was not effectively centralized, despite the structure of central government, and the Jurchens were unable to agree on ends and means among themselves. Thus in speaking of Emperor Liang's 亮 (Hai-ling Wang 海陵王 r. 1150–1161) reorganization of central government and purges of imperial clansmen and military leaders, Chan writes, "In the midst of these purges, Emperor Liang vigorously pursued the dual policy of centralization and sinicization to strengthen his authority over the Jurchen and Chinese populace. . . . Some of these measures were designed to legitimate sinitic administration, others to widen the opportunities of the Chinese literati for bureaucratic service to counteract the power of the Jurchen aristocrats, and rally support of the sinicized Jurchens to the new government" (p. 64). We can conclude that Liang failed, for aristocrats rebelled and he was murdered. Despite a period of relative stability under Emperor Yung 雍 (Shih-tsung 世宗 r. 1161–1189), it is fair to say that the tension between the imperial center and the military artistocrats plagued every reign.

This tension between emperor and aristocrats can be directly correlated with a tension between civil and military interests. Perhaps mistakenly, the Chin emperors were persuaded that they could secure themselves against their Jurchen rivals by establishing the institutions of civil government to centralize authority. The emperors broadened their base of support and sought to make the institutions effective by bringing in Hans (and Khitans) whose interests were better served by a centralized order than by a decentralized one dominated by military aristocrats. Emperor Yung even created a Jurchen language examination system to cultivate a group of non-aristocratic "civilized" Jurchens loyal to the imperial interest. By creating this group and calling for a "revival" of native traditions, at the same time he was rapidly increasing the number of Han literati in the bureaucracy, the emperor protected himself from the charge that he was siding with the Hans (and Khitans) against his own Jurchens, and thus further exacerbating the third great tension, that between the Jurchens and the conquered Hans (and Khitans).

All these tensions were exacerbated by the hostility between Chin and Sung. The Jurchen political elite never achieved a lasting consensus on the issue of whether the dynasty existed to serve the Jur-

chen conquerors or all those who lived under the Jurchen heaven, including the Han population which had once belonged to Sung. The emperors often saw the advantage of claiming to be the true successors to Chinese dynasties, an attitude which implied working for the good of all. However, substantiating this claim could imply war against Sung, which made the same claim, as Chan points out with reference to Emperor Liang's attempt to conquer Sung in the 1150s (p. 67). Moreover, a successful war under imperial leadership increased the emperor's power over his Jurchen rivals. Jurchen nobles were less well served by an imperial system in which they were likely to lose power to bureaucrats. We can speculate that the aristocrats, anxious to thwart the center's encroachment on their prerogatives, defended the original idea that Chin was for the Jurchens and saw little advantage in fighting Sung. The emperors were in a difficult position. They ruled because they were Jurchens and they depended on the Jurchen-led military to suppress internal rebellions and foreign threats. But they needed Han bureaucrats to maintain a centralized civil system on their behalf and were often tempted by the idea of being the sole rulers of China. Perhaps the best policy for emperors was gradually to broaden the purview of the civil administration and increase their military power while avoiding major wars and taking care not to provoke the semi-autonomous military leaders. The first debates (1194–1202) took place during a period when this policy had been successful and the imperial center was dominant and self-confident. The second debate (1214) took place after military defeats when military factions dominated the court.

Chan sees the larger historical meaning of the Chin debates as the confirmation of the policy of sinicization. He notes that the participants in the discussions over Chin's cosmic power "were all concerned with supporting the new emperor in the face of the challenges posed by internal dissidents and external adversaries" (p. 88). He argues further that the emperors in question were seeking to secure their rule by reaching out to their Han subjects and the sinicized Jurchens. The debates gave the emperors an opportunity to legitimize themselves with those groups because the discussants were divided over whether Chin should identify with Chinese dynastic tradition or the autonomous Jurchen tradition. Thus in 1202, for example, when the emperor chose "earth," implying that

Chin was the legitimate successor to Sung ("fire"), the choice was tantamount to announcing an intention "to pursue pro-Chinese policies after the failure of the nativist movement" (p. 93), while in 1214 a reaffirmation of that choice allowed the new emperor to "relegitimate" his rule by affirming his support for those policies in order to appeal to "sinicized Jurchen servants and Chinese scholar officials" (p. 113).

Professor Chan's interpretation of the debates is plausible. He arrives at it through an extensive analysis of the divisions among participants in the debate. However, I was not persuaded by his analysis and came to doubt his interpretation of what the participants were "really" debating and what the emperor was actually deciding.

Although Chan finds a polarity between idealists and pragmatists, his crucial distinction is between "nativistic autonomists," who "espoused the Jurchen indigenous cause," and "sinitic autonomists," who "supported sinicization."[8] He argues that in 1194–1202 those who ignored five phases theory and linkage to a Chinese dynasty while citing Aguda's founding were, *ipso facto*, espousing Jurchen nativism, while those who claimed that Chin had succeeded a Chinese dynasty were proponents of sinicization. Leaving aside the question of how it was possible to defend the imperial interest by espousing Jurchen nativism, it does not follow necessarily that those who claimed that Aguda's successful founding had adequately legitimated Chin were espousing "the Jurchen indigenous cause." A refusal to link Chin to a Chinese dynasty, Sung in particular, could also imply that Chin should be seen as but one state in a multi-state world. Moreover, there are grounds for concluding that Chan's premier examples of "nativistic autonomists" were not such. Minister of Justice Li Yü 李愈 had, according to his biography, passed the literary *chin shih* examination, "made the methods of the *Ju* 儒 his occupation," and served as an effective local administrator

[8] Chan credits these two categories to Michael Rodgers, "The Late Chin Debates on Dynastic Legitimacy." However, Rodgers only used "nativistic autonomists," his label for those who claimed, against the majority view, that Chin was autonomous in relation to China. Clearly, if the issue was whether or not Chin should identify with China, those who held that it should were not proponents of autonomy and "sinitic autonomists" is an oxymoron.

on behalf of the central government.[9] Han-lin Executive Academician Tang Huai-ying 黨懷英 was one of the major literary figures of his generation. According to Tang's biography, "When Chang-tsung first acceded to the throne, he favored cultured writing and broadly sought out literati with literary learning to serve as attendants," but his selection of Tang was opposed.[10] The activities of both men suggest they were "sinicizers" in Chan's terms, men devoted to the civil and centralizing interests of the emperor. Their profile matches that of Sun To 孫鐸, Chang Hsing-chien 張行簡 and Yang T'ing-yün 楊庭筠, whom Chan classifies as "sinitic autonomists."

If Li and Tang were not defending the Jurchen "indigenous cause" what were they defending? I suggest that, as tensions with Sung grew and the irredentist clamor in the south increased, these Han literati were defending peace as opposed to war. A formal claim to have succeeded Sung could imply that Chin was no longer willing to recognize Southern Sung as a legitimate political entity. In fact, although Chan finds no evidence for concluding that the 1202 choice of "earth" was aimed at preparing for a "showdown with Southern Sung" (p. 95), a major confrontation soon followed and Chan thinks it plausible that the two were related. We know that some literati explicitly opposed military unification. Wang Johsü 王若虛, who was not involved in these debates, wrote, "There is no reason why every country should be destroyed and unification achieved."[11] By avoiding the issue of legitimate succession, Li and Tang sidestepped the issue of relations with Sung. For Li, Aguda's adoption of "Gold" to name the dynasty implied "metal" and that could be the end of the matter. For Tang, Chin's military conquest and possession of the "central territories" implied "metal" and he found an appropriate Chinese analogy. We might also argue that the proponents of succession to Liao were making a similar case

[9] T'o T'o 脫脫 et al., *Chin shih* 金史 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1975), 96.2129–31. Li also produced a literary collection, now lost.

[10] *Chin shih* 125.2726–27.

[11] Quoted in Jing-shen Tao, *The Jurchen in Twelfth-Century China*, p. 104. Chao Ping-wen 趙秉文, who participated in the 1214 debate, took a similar stand against military unification; see *Hsien-hsien lao-jen fu-shui chi* 閑閑老人釜水集 (*Chiu Chin jen chi* 九金人集 ed.), 14.11a–14b, "Shu-han cheng ming lun" 蜀漢正名論.

and, perhaps, suggesting more attention to Khitan interests as well. Those "sinitic autonomists" who argued that Chin should adopt "metal" in succession to T'ang's "earth" also ignored Sung.

However, a group of one Han and four Jurchens (representing three different clans) contended that Chin should succeed Sung's "fire" and adopt "earth." Chan points out that in 1214 the Presidential Council saw this as an extremist position (although Chang-tsung had adopted it in 1202), but he does not explain why it should have been "the most dangerous and radical position." The most plausible answer, I think, is that it was a strongly anti-Sung position which signalled a willingness to challenge Sung militarily. According to the 1214 document, the proponents of earth had taken the view that "Sung's cycle had already been terminated" and had accused those who "refused to mention Sung and tortuously argued in favor of linking [the dynasty] with T'ang" of being men who believed that "Sung had not yet been extinguished" and "did not want to see its end" (p. 152). At the very least this group was questioning the loyalty of the other discussants (all of whom were Hans).

I think Chan is right in seeing these "extremists" as servants of the imperial interest. Yet it is also clear that they differed from those who did not want Chin to claim succession to Sung. Advocacy of succession to Sung implied confrontation and thus greater court involvement in the military and further attempts to centralize military control. It also implied considerable confidence in the court's ability to survive a challenge from the Jurchen warlords, who had revolted when Emperor Liang had tried to conquer Sung and make central authority paramount. By contrast, opposition to the adoption of "earth"—that is, to cosmic succession to Sung, implied conciliation, maintenance of the domestic and international balance of power, and a predominant concern with maintaining the gains civil interests had already made. It is not surprising that a debate over Chin's cosmic power should be part of a debate over a policy choice which could determine the future of the dynasty. For the choice of policy could be related to the more fundamental question of whether Chin should see itself as part of a multi-state world, accepting as a consequence that it would have to find ways of balancing the interests of civil and military, court and aristocracy, and Hans and Jurchens, or whether the Chin court should seek to resolve these

tensions once and for all by achieving unquestioned political supremacy domestically and internationally. Although his advisors could not agree, the emperor chose for "earth." War followed. According to a later literati source Han officials opposed the war but were afraid to speak out.[12]

When we examine the political situation at the time the discussions were reopened in 1214, we can better understand why the "earth" position appeared dangerous and why the majority of discussants (thirteen out of seventeen by my count) now called for reversing the verdict in favor of "metal." Although Chin military successes in 1207–1208 were probably not "a deathblow to the tottering Southern Sung dynasty" (p. 85), they did seem to confirm Chin strength. In 1214 the situation was very different. Chin had failed to defeat the Mongol invaders. Sung and Hsia had taken advantage of the crisis to attack. There was discussion of moving the capital to Kaifeng. An emperor had been deposed by a military dictator, who then installed Emperor Hsun, and military lords dominated the court. Chan argues that the debates were reopened to offer the beleaguered new emperor a chance to reaffirm the policy of sinicization and, probably, to justify moving the capital to Kaifeng. But the problem here is why the emperor should have decided to "legitimize" his rule by reaffirming "earth" (if he actually did) when his advisers called for "metal." I would suggest that his advisors, at least, had understood that Chin could ill afford to further antagonize Sung. But there is more to the story.

Here again I suspect Chan's distinction between sinicizers and nativists is off the mark.[13] To support "metal" in 1214 was to choose for peace and internal reconciliation. Proponents of "metal" explained that Chin could be both the product of an autonomous Jurchen tradition (the rise of the Jurchens in the northeast, Aguda's naming of the dynasty, and the spontaneous signs which

[12] See the discussion in Yüan Hao-wen's 元好問 biography of Yang Yün-i 楊雲翼 in *Yüan I-shan hsien-sheng ch'üan chi* 元遺山先生全集 (*Chiu Chin jen chi* ed.), 18.6a–6b.

[13] By Chan's criteria only the paper by Shih-mo Shih-chi and Lü Tzu-yü was nativist. However, Shih-mo Shih-chi (a Khitan rather than a Jurchen) appears in his biography as a devoted servant of the civil center. He passed both the literary and classics examination. After 1214 he opposed the annexation of tilled lands to settle troops. Always the emperor's man, he served as a civil official in a regional military apparatus and eventually became Minister of Rites and a Han-lin Academician. See *Chin shih* 114.2517–19.

confirmed his mandate) and the successor to the tradition of civil government (succession to T'ang but also, by reassigning the phases, to Sung). The four proponents of "earth" rested on the precedent of Chang-tsung's decision and thus avoided the issue. The retreat from "earth" to "metal" implied standing down from a confrontation with Sung while recognizing that Chin was a creation of the Jurchens under the Wan-yen clan. But the implication it carried of giving priority to Jurchen interests, which presumably soothed the military (although it stressed the supremacy of Aguda's line), was balanced by a claim to be in the line of Chinese dynasties, a claim which might have assuaged the fears of advocates on centralization and civilization. I suggest, therefore, that in 1214 the discussants opted for peace while seeking to cover over their internal divisions. If there is insufficient evidence for determining whether Emperor Hsun officially reaffirmed "earth" or merely avoided deciding (p. 112), I do not see why we should conclude that the 1214 debate was primarily intended to legitimate the emperor's continuation of "pro-Chinese" policies (p. 113).

My differences with Professor Chan are due, I think, to a preference for supposing that political tensions have greater explanatory power in Chin history than the process of "sinicization." The retreat to "metal" in 1214 suggests that Chin failed not only to establish supremacy but also to resolve the tensions between emperor and aristocrats, civil and military, and Hans and Jurchens. These debates also speak to earlier occasions when legitimate succession via the five phases was at issue. They show, I believe, that such occasions could also provide a cover for debating matters of policy and value too sensitive to discuss openly.

Legitimation in Imperial China is a substantial work dealing with issues of real importance in Chinese political history. Professor Chan's careful translations of the Chin documents make the debates accessible and his annotations and discussions of Chin history and the history of *cheng t'ung* in China make them intelligible.